



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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### Testimony

**In support of HB 6880**

**Housing Committee**

**February 16, 2017**

Good afternoon, Senator Hwang, Senator Slossberg, Representative Butler, Representative Kupchick, and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in favor of I believe will help our communities meet their targets for affordable housing growth. As always, I appreciate this Committee's willingness to open and sustain a dialogue about our state's mechanisms for encouraging the development of affordable housing.

HB 6880 would lower the number of housing unit-equivalent points needed for a moratorium, expand the unit types that count towards a moratorium, and redefine median income for purposes of the incentive housing zone statutes. Many other bills on today's agenda also include one or more of these provisions.

I believe constructive amendments to the 8-30g affordable housing statute are needed, because instead of encouraging and fostering affordable housing, it has in many cases made it difficult for towns to achieve the goals it sets for them. No matter how hard it tries, no town whose affordable housing stock today represents 3% of its total housing can reach the 10% threshold overnight. In the intervening years, towns are increasingly exposed to legal challenges under 8-30g, and many must spend more time on dealing with those challenges than on partnering actively with developers to identify and plan

affordable housing that meets local zoning requirements and offer residents the best possible quality of life.

The availability of a four-year moratorium has been helpful in this regard, and communities that can obtain one gain the time to put a proactive plan in place. For many, however, obtaining a moratorium is still not within reach quickly enough to allow breathing room to work properly and constructively with developers. HB 6880 effectively addresses this issue.

In my area, small towns are making serious, good-faith attempts to achieve the affordable housing goals that are established by our state law, not only because the law requires them to do so, but also because offering a wide variety of housing stock is good for the community. But the same law that sets the goals also erects barriers to reaching them.

I respectfully urge the Committee to pass HB 6880.

Finally, a suggestion on avenues for continuing the dialogue on this subject. Moving forward, it might help the state and its communities move faster on affordable housing to identify further ways to recognize and incentivize towns – with 8-30g exemptions or other measures -- that are demonstrably working consistently over time toward the 10% threshold by designating affordable housing zones, actively soliciting developers to purchase, and adhering to a clear schedule for construction. This would both incentivize a faster increase in affordable housing and allow towns to respect their own planning concerns. Under this scenario, everyone wins. Affordable housing increases, economic opportunity for residents expands, and our smaller communities protect the integrity of their character and zoning regulations.